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ABSTRACT

This module, one of 25 on vocational education training for careers in environmental health occupations, contains self-instructional materials on communicating with environmental health staff. Following guidelines for students and instructors and an introduction that explains what the student will learn are three lessons: (1) identifying and developing seven positive work attitudes; (2) identifying and developing effective communication techniques; and (3) applying positive work attitudes and effective communication techniques toward resolving work-related communication problems. Each lesson contains objectives, recommended methods and locations for practice, performance criteria, equipment and supplies to perform a task, detailed step-by-step instructions for learning a task, and performance exercises. Performance tests cover the subject matter of each lesson. (CT)

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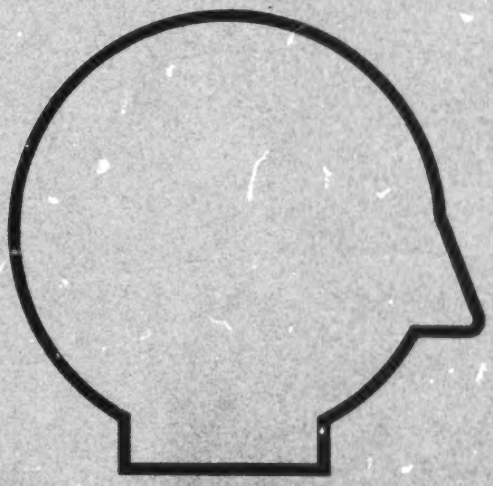

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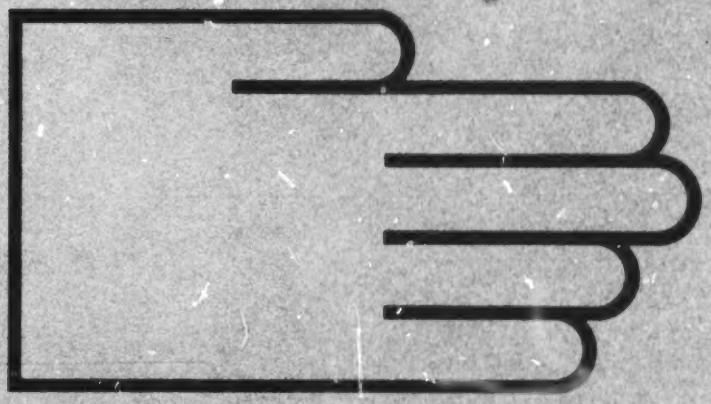

Module 25

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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FOREWORD

The Curriculum and Instruction Branch of the Office of Vocational and Adult Education, U.S. Department of Education, identified a need to improve the training opportunities for vocational education students interested in pursuing careers in environmental health. To fulfill that need, Consumer Dynamics, Inc., a Rockville, Maryland, based company, was awarded the contract to develop performance-oriented, competency-based modules in the environmental health sciences.

COMMUNICATING WITH ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH STAFF is one of the modules in the series, "Vocational Education Training in Environmental Health Sciences." The module content is based on selected materials in the environmental health field. The module is intended to supplement existing course materials.

CONTENTS

FOREWORD i

USING THESE SELF-INSTRUCTION MATERIALS 1
- Guidelines For Students 1
- Guidelines For Instructors 2

INTRODUCTION 3
- Background 3
- What You Will Learn 4

LESSON ONE 5
- Objective 5
- Where And How To Practice 5
- How Well You Must Do 5
- Things You Need 5
- Getting There--Steps 6
- Exercises 10
- Films And Slide/Tape Programs 10

LESSON TWO 11
- Objective 11
- Where And How To Practice 11
- How Well You Must Do 11
- Things You Need 11
- Getting There--Steps 12
- Exercises 16

LESSON THREE 17
- Objective 17
- Where And How To Practice 17
- How Well You Must Do 17
- Things You Need 17
- Getting There--Steps 18
- Exercises 21

PERFORMANCE TEST 22
- Developing Positive Work Attitudes 22
- Resolving Communication Problems 23

REFERENCES 24

USING THESE SELF-INSTRUCTION MATERIALS

This self-instruction learning package or module is designed to allow both students and instructors flexibility of use. Although primarily intended for use in existing training programs, the module can be used by anyone interested in learning new skills or perking up old ones. Therefore, two sets of guidelines are presented--one set addressed to students and the other set addressed to instructors. First, find out how you, the student, should use the materials in this book.

GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS

Take the Performance Test as a pretest.

When you pick up this book and work through it, your goal will not be a letter grade or a high score on an exam. Instead, you will work to develop skills that you can measure. You will not have to worry about how well someone else is doing. Before you start work on this module, you should, first, find out if you have sufficient skills to start training by reading through the section called PERFORMANCE TEST. If you think you can do all or most of the items in this test, ask your instructor to evaluate your skills.

Work on parts you need to practice.

If you do everything well, according to the criteria in the Performance Test guidelines, you will not need to spend time working on this module. If after taking the Performance Test you discover there are parts you need to practice, follow the key to each item in FOR FURTHER STUDY.

Work straight through each lesson in the order presented.

Should you decide to completely work through this module, begin with the INTRODUCTION and go straight through each of the three lessons. The lesson begins with the OBJECTIVE of the training. Follow the instructions for each part in the order presented. Practice each step in a lesson until you can do it according to the criteria stated for the step. At the end of a lesson, do the EXERCISES. When there are audiovisuals listed at the end of a lesson, ask your instructor for help in obtaining them.

Take the Performance Test as a posttest.

Finally, after you have mastered all of the exercises in each lesson, ask your instructor to evaluate your response to each item in the Performance Test. The items in the Performance Test are intended for use as a posttest to evaluate the quality of your performance. Turn now to the Performance Test.

USING THESE SELF-INSTRUCTION MATERIALS

GUIDELINES FOR INSTRUCTORS

Approach

The approach of these materials is to provide the student with the opportunity to learn skills for communicating effectively with environmental health staff.

Independent Study

Students can work independently and at their own pace. It is important, however, that each student have ample opportunity to discuss the lesson material with other students and with you. Depending on the time frame you set for completing each lesson, you may want to start a group off in each lesson with a discussion.

As a Laboratory Workbook

Alternatively, you may choose to use this module as a laboratory workbook in a structured laboratory session. With this option, you may allow students greater access to your assistance, especially in watching them perform the pre- and posttest portions of the training and in providing formal opportunities for discussion.

General Instructions

Read through each lesson to anticipate what learning conditions you will need to make available for students. Also, order any audiovisuals or reading materials you think may present a complementary perspective to the training in this module. Use the items in the Performance Test as the minimum requirements for gauging successful completion of the training.

Specific Instructions

Students should be encouraged to adopt a professional outlook, concentrating on work-related situations rather than on personal problems. As an instructor, you should direct and assist students to develop effective professional communication skills.

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

Effective communication is an essential ingredient of successful job performance as an environmental health worker. To reduce misunderstanding and conflict in the workplace, it is important that we develop and practice good communication skills. We have learned to communicate the way we do largely by trial and error, by the rewards and punishments we have received, by our perceptions of the reactions of others, and by modeling our behavior after that of others. As we experience life, we develop a system of theories, adopt beliefs and values, develop attitudes and expectancies, and learn to communicate, to act and react, and to accept certain actions and reactions of others. Few of us have been explicitly guided in the development of effective communication skills.

The command of communication skills is vital to job performance. Nearly every aspect of environmental health involves the exchange of vital information between individuals. Ideal communication occurs when the receiver understands 100 percent of the ideas, knowledge, and concerns communicated by the sender. Although this ideal communicative situation rarely occurs, there are certain skills that can be used to increase the effectiveness of job-related communication. These skills include giving and receiving feedback, active listening, and problem solving. They are all based on a set of positive attitudes about workplace situations and conditions.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

When you finish working through the steps and exercises in this module, you will be able to communicate with other environmental health staff.

You will learn how to communicate effectively in three lessons:

- o Lesson One

  You will be able to identify and develop seven positive work attitudes.

- o Lesson Two

  You will be able to identify and develop effective communication techniques.

- o Lesson Three

  You will be able to apply positive work attitudes and effective communication techniques toward resolving work-related communication problems.

LESSON ONE

OBJECTIVE

You will be able to identify and develop seven positive work attitudes.

WHERE AND HOW TO PRACTICE

In developing positive work attitudes, it is important to practice communicating freely with other students and your instructor. You should practice this lesson where others are available for discussions and where you have workspace for writing. It is important that you learn to reduce the barriers to effective communication. A critical first step is developing positive work attitudes.

HOW WELL YOU MUST DO

You must be able to accurately name and provide an example of seven positive work attitudes.

THINGS YOU NEED

You will need the following materials:

- pen or pencil
- pad of paper.

Instructions: Now turn to the next page and begin work on Lesson One, "Getting There--Steps."

GETTING THERE--STEPS

STEP 1

Confidence is the belief that you are capable of doing your job well. When this attitude is perceived by others, they are assured, when they exchange information with you, that what is said is relevant, has merit, and is important to accomplishing their goals and yours.

KEY POINT 1

CONFIDENCE is a positive attitude you develop about your ability to perform your job well.

STEP 2

Responsibility means the carrying out of your required tasks with the accuracy and speed that is expected of you by your superiors, peers, and subordinates. You act responsibly when you refuse to cut corners or take shortcuts in getting the job done. For example, you act responsibly when:

- you perform the necessary calibration checks of monitoring equipment prior to collecting data
- you use equipment within the manufacturer's use specifications
- you report all of the data you collect, not just the data that "looks good."

KEY POINT 2

RESPONSIBILITY is an attitude that compels you to carry out a task according to performance standards.

STEP 3

Perseverance means that when you set goals, you will strive to achieve them despite setbacks or detours. This attitude is an important one to develop because there are few tasks in environmental health that can be accomplished using a textbook. For example, suppose you are scheduled to take sound level readings of traffic noise at a specific location on a given day at a given time. When you arrive, it is raining and the traffic is very light and unrepresentative of usual conditions. You will have to come back and try again. You cannot give up the task.

KEY POINT 3

PERSEVERANCE is an attitude that enables you to finish a task despite the setbacks.

STEP 4

As an imaginative environmental health worker, you are not limited by what you have done before. When you see a problem, you look for ways in which it is special and how you can solve it. In environmental health, every problem is different. You must use imagination in the application of known principles and practices to solve problems. Often the results, equipment, and procedures you have learned must be applied in new ways to solve new problems.

KEY POINT 4

IMAGINATION permits you to look for and select different approaches to performing a task.

STEP 5

Awareness means being in touch with new and better ways to solve environmental health problems. You are always on the lookout for better approaches: You keep tabs on research and development by reading environmental health journals, attending conferences, taking refresher courses, and talking to others. You keep abreast of how others are solving their problems, and what new technologies and approaches are available.

KEY POINT 5

AWARENESS results in your being able to perform a task in a more effective and efficient way.

STEP 6

You function more effectively if you take a positive attitude when under pressure. As an environmental health worker, there is potential for facing different types of pressure, including emergencies, deadlines, and unpopular assignments. Learn to anticipate pressures before they occur and to prepare, in advance, options likely to help you overcome tough situations. Take the situation in stride by being organized, being direct, obtaining help from a qualified source in a timely manner, and avoiding panic.

KEY POINT 6

A POSITIVE RESPONSE TO PRESSURE will help you to be effective in reacting to a demanding situation.

STEP 7

When you are decisive, you are able to select a proper course of action without delay. Collecting data and solving problems in environmental health require decisiveness in emergencies that arise, deadlines to meet, and alternatives to be evaluated. Decisiveness includes considering your options, knowing whom to contact, and what information to check before you act.

KEY POINT 7

DECISIVENESS implies being able to select a proper course of action without delay.

EXERCISES

Instructions: List seven positive work attitudes necessary in the environmental health field. For each attitude, write a description of a situation that you or others have encountered where this attitude was important and was used. Describe another situation where each attitude should have been used but was not.

FILMS AND SLIDE/TAPE PROGRAMS

U.S. Department of Education. "Person-To-Person," National Audiovisual Center, Washington, DC, 1977.

This 28-minute, 16-mm color film explores skills and attitudes that aid people in getting along well with others in one-to-one situations. A workbook is included.

U.S. Department of Education. "Christinitas," National Audiovisual Center, Washington, DC, 1979.

This 30-minute, 16-mm color film discusses the myth that the only creative people are artists and writers. It shows that people of all occupations and ages can think creatively.

LESSON TWO

OBJECTIVE

You will be able to identify and develop effective communication techniques.

WHERE AND HOW TO PRACTICE

This lesson will be carried out in the same location and manner as described in Lesson One. Carefully follow each step in the order given.

HOW WELL YOU MUST DO

You must be able to identify seven effective communication techniques.

THINGS YOU NEED

You will need the same materials as in Lesson One.

Instructions: Now turn to the next page and begin work on Lesson Two, "Getting There--Steps."

GETTING THERE--STEPS

STEP 1

To communicate effectively with environmental health staff and others you have contact with, you must use simple, clear, and concise words to convey your message. Communication problems often arise because the subject matter is made unnecessarily complex. In environmental health you must communicate effectively. For example, you may be called upon to provide information and instructions to workers about data collection, and to management about the purpose of an inspection.

KEY POINT 1

SIMPLIFY THE SUBJECT to convey your thoughts effectively.

STEP 2

When communicating with others, adjust your approach to their understanding of the problem, not yours. Put yourself in the other person's shoes. Choose your words, phrases, and sentences based on the level of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of the people you are trying to reach. Your approach is important, since you may be asked to communicate the same message to a variety of people. For example, if you are required to monitor workplace air, you must explain how the sampling equipment will be used; this will gain the support of the individuals being monitored.

KEY POINT 2

ADJUST YOUR APPROACH when talking about a technical subject with people in different work roles.

STEP 3	KEY POINT 3
Provide accurate examples of the subjects you are trying to communicate. Use facts, analogies, and comparisons as communication tools. A story is an excellent vehicle for carrying your message. For example, if you require the aid of a worker in monitoring workplace conditions, explain the task with a story about your experience at another site and how you were or were not assisted by personnel there.	USE EXAMPLES AND STORIES to explain your task objectives.
STEP 4	KEY POINT 4
Be sure you communicate more than a fragment of your message. Get the whole picture across. In conveying a message, first break it down into its parts, decide how to fully communicate each part, and then connect the parts to form a complete message.	GET THE WHOLE PICTURE ACROSS.

STEP 5

Be a good listener when someone else is talking. Practice the following listening skills:

- o Stop talking--you cannot listen when you are talking.
- o Put the talker at ease--help him or her feel free to talk.
- o Show the talker that you want to listen--look and act interested; listen in order to understand rather than to reply.
- o Remove distractions--do not doodle, tap, or shuffle papers.
- o Empathize with the talker--try to put yourself in his or her shoes.
- o Be patient--allow plenty of time; do not interrupt.
- o Hold your temper--if angry, you may get the wrong meaning.
- o Do not be unduly argumentative or critical--do not put the talker on the defensive.
- o Ask questions--encourage the talker to develop points further.

KEY POINT 5

BE A GOOD LISTENER.

STEP 6

Determine if you are receiving positive feedback when you are communicating with a co-worker. As you are speaking, encourage your listener to provide feedback that is specific rather than general, and feedback that is focused on your behavior as a speaker rather than on you as an individual. For example, when giving critical instructions, ask the listener to repeat the directions in his or her own words.

KEY POINT 6

OBTAIN FEEDBACK on what you say.

STEP 7

Provide feedback when someone is communicating with you. Use good listening techniques as described in Step 5. Focus your feedback on the message and the speaking behavior. Ask questions at appropriate times and repeat critical instructions. Be sure you tell the speaker that you do or do not understand the message.

KEY POINT 7

GIVE FEEDBACK by answering or asking questions, or by providing supplementary information.

EXERCISES

Instruction 1: List seven techniques you can use for effective communication.

Instruction 2: Select an environmental health monitoring skill (e.g., monitoring workplace air, microwave radiation, stream quality) with which you are familiar. Imagine the following situation: You are required to collect heat stress measurements in a manufacturer's plant every day for 1 month. Your superior directs you to make an initial inspection and to train an onsite worker to take thermometer readings each day until you return to pick up the apparatus. Write a brief description of your monitoring function; then, for each of the seven techniques listed above, explain how you would effectively communicate with the worker.

Instruction 3: Write a message you want to communicate and then write it again using simpler words to convey the same meaning. What audience is this message written for? Write it a third way for another audience. Now write it a fourth way, but this time include a story to convey the message.

Instruction 4: Ask a friend to describe an important task that he or she is involved in at work, or to tell you about a hobby. Practice good listening skills and provide feedback. Now tell this person about something important to you and ask him or her to give you feedback. Repeat these activities using an environmental health-related topic.

LESSON THREE

OBJECTIVE

You will be able to apply positive work attitudes and effective communication techniques toward resolving work-related communication problems.

WHERE AND HOW TO PRACTICE

This lesson will be carried out in the same location and manner as described in Lesson One.

HOW WELL YOU MUST DO

You must be able to identify six steps that can be applied to resolving work-related communication problems.

THINGS YOU NEED

You will need the same materials as in Lesson One.

Instructions: Now turn to the next page and begin work on Lesson Three, "Getting There--Steps."

GETTING THERE--STEPS

STEP 1

To develop communication initiative, look ahead to communication events and problems; search for a direct interpretation of a message, and look into the background and purpose of the communication. For example, if you need to instruct an environmental health worker who will be assisting you in your inspection duties, try to anticipate your approach, problems you may face, the best way to communicate, and how you can explain the why, what, where, who, and how of the message. Use the seven communication techniques developed in Lesson Two to improve your initiative.

KEY POINT 1

DEVELOP COMMUNICATION INITIATIVE for organizing your approach toward fulfilling task objectives.

STEP 2

Building confidence in your communication ability takes time, patience, and sincerity. To increase your confidence, practice communicating regularly with other workers by:

- o greeting each person daily
- o finding out the special interests of other workers
- o taking a sincere interest in the hobbies of others
- o encouraging others to come to you with their communication problems
- o taking action to resolve a communication difficulty.

Use the seven positive attitudes developed in Lesson One to build your confidence.

KEY POINT 2

BUILD COMMUNICATION CONFIDENCE.

STEP 3

Get the facts surrounding a communication problem. Review the record of a problem you have. Check to see what rules, regulations, and customs apply to the problem. Contact other individuals concerned as well as those with some knowledge about the problem to check the facts. This often makes the problem clearer and more solvable. Also, get opinions and feelings about the problem.

KEY POINT 3

GET ALL THE FACTS about a communication problem.

STEP 4	KEY POINT 4
Fit the facts together. Weigh the pros and cons before you decide on what action should be taken. Clarify the who, what, when, where, how, and why of the communication problem. Check the principles, foundations, regulations, policies, and practices against the facts to help your decision. Set up and list some alternative possible actions. Consider the effects of possible actions upon individuals, the group, and your work environment. Determine the final action after following the previous steps.	FIT THE FACTS TOGETHER.
STEP 5	KEY POINT 5
Take action to solve the problem based on your final decision. Decide on the who, what, when, where, how, and why of your action. Determine the best time to effect a positive solution to your communication problem and implement your action at that time.	TAKE ACTION AT THE APPROPRIATE TIME.
STEP 6	KEY POINT 6
Check the results of your decision. Follow up on the action taken. Set dates on which to discuss the results of an action. Analyze the changes resulting from your action and determine if they are desirable. Obtain the reactions of those affected by your decision.	FOLLOW UP on the results of your decision.

EXERCISES

Instructions: Write a 500-word case history about a work-related communication problem you have encountered. Describe how each of the six key points you learned in this lesson could be used to resolve the problem.

PERFORMANCE TEST

Instructions: Check your skill level or progress by working through each of the items in this test. If you can perform each item as required, place a check in the space provided. When all of the items are checked, you are ready to demonstrate your skills to your instructor. You may use the following list if needed. You will be considered trained in a skill after your instructor aproves your performance of each of the following items:

DEVELOPING POSITIVE WORK ATTITUDES

No. 1 _____ Describe how you are valuable, worthy, or capable as an environmental health worker.

No. 2 _____ Describe your responsibility as an environmental health worker.

No. 3 _____ Describe a goal you have as an environmental health worker.

No. 4 _____ Describe how you can improve a routine environmental health task by using imagination.

No. 5 _____ Describe how you can become more aware of your work environment.

No. 6 _____ Describe how you react positively to pressure.

No. 7 _____ Describe how you are decisive as an environmental health worker.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

If you could not perform one or more of the seven items above, review and practice the following lesson steps:

No. 1
Lesson One, Step 1

No. 2
Lesson One, Step 2

No. 3
Lesson One, Step 3

PERFORMANCE TEST

No. 4
Lesson One, Step 4

No. 5
Lesson One, Step 5

No. 6
Lesson One, Step 6

No. 7
Lesson One, Step 7

RESOLVING COMMUNICATION PROBLEMS

No. 1 _____ Describe seven communication skills that you can use to avoid work-related communication problems.

No. 2 _____ Describe six steps that you can take to resolve a work-related communication problem.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

If you could not perform one or more of the two items above, review and practice the following lesson steps:

No. 1
Lesson Two, Steps 1 through 7

No. 2
Lesson Three, Steps 1 through 6

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